

2014

Collaborative Costume Design

April Emily Andrew

University of South Carolina - Columbia

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/etd>



Part of the [Theatre and Performance Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Andrew, A. E. (2014). *Collaborative Costume Design*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/etd/2657>

This Open Access Dissertation is brought to you by Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact dillarda@mailbox.sc.edu.

Collaborative Costume Design

by

April Emily Andrew

Bachelor of Arts
Furman University, 2010

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Master of Fine Arts in

Theatre

College of Arts and Sciences

University of South Carolina

2014

Accepted by:

Lisa Martin-Stuart, Director of Thesis

Jim Hunter, Reader

Robert Richmond, Reader

Lacy Ford, Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies

© Copyright by April Emily Andrew, 2014
All Rights Reserved

DEDICATION

For my parents and my professors.

Thanks for all the love and support!

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores my portfolio of graduate work as a costume designer, covering four diverse theatrical works. *27 Wagons Full of Cotton*, a self proclaimed “Mississippi Delta Comedy” by Tennessee Williams examines the themes of domestic violence, isolation, and desire in rural America. *Polaroid Stories*, a modern poetic play by Naomi Iizuka, blends the harsh realities facing today’s street youth with classical mythology to create a unique and theatrical world. Jeffrey Hatcher transported us back to the spectacle, scandal, and upheaval of King Charles II’s English Restoration in *Compleat Female Stage Beauty*, following actor Edward Kynaston, who famed diarist Samuel Pepys acclaimed the most beautiful woman on the English stage, and his fall from celebrity into obscurity. Finally Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, arguably some of the most beautiful and wonderful words written for the stage and my 3rd year project, provided an opportunity to form a “special world” for our production and test my creativity. This paper explores the design process of each work from beginning to end, including concept discussions, the research process, character specific design analysis, and the overall results of the productions.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
LIST OF FIGURES	vi
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 1: 27 Wagons Full of Cotton	4
CHAPTER 2: Polaroid Stories	12
CHAPTER 3: Compleat Female Stage Beauty	31
CHAPTER 4: Hamlet	46
CONCLUSION	59
BIBLIOGRAPHY	60

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1 – Andy Hernandez as Silva Viccaro (Production Photo)	8
Figure 1.2 – Don Russell as Jake Meighan (Production Photo)	9
Figure 1.3 – Amanda Forstrom as Flora Meighan (Production Photo)	10
Figure 1.4 – 27 Wagons Full of Cotton (Production Photo).....	12
Figure 2.1 – (From Left to Right) Don Russell as G (Production Photo), G (Costume Rendering).....	17
Figure 2.2 – Jessi Noel as Persephone/Semele (Production Photo).....	19
Figure 2.3 – (From Left to Right) Eurydice (Costume Rendering), Amanda Forstrom as Eurydice (Production Photo).....	21
Figure 2.4 – Joe Mallon as Orpheus/Tereus (Production Photo).....	22
Figure 2.5 – (From Left to Right) Andy Hernandez as D (Production Photo) and Caroline Wilson as Philomel (Production Photos)	22
Figure 2.6 – (From Left to Right) Neon Girl (Costume Rendering), Yvonne Senat as Neon Girl (Production Photo).....	26
Figure 2.7 – Sam Kinsman as Skinheadboy (Production Photo).....	27
Figure 2.8 – (From Left to Right) Liam MacDougall as Narcissus (Production Photo), Narcissus (Costume Rendering)	29
Figure 2.9 – Catherine Friesen as Echo (Production Photo).....	30
Figure 2.10 – Polaroid Stories (Production Photo).....	32
Figure 3.1 – (From Left to Right) Cory Lipman as King Charles II (Production Photo), King Charles II (Costume Rendering), Nell Gwynn (Costume Rendering), Leeanna Rubin as Nell Gwynn (Production Photo)	37

Figure 3.2 – (From Left to Right) Sir Charles Sedley (Costume Rendering), Stephen Ingle as Sir Charles Sedley (Production Photo)	38
Figure 3.3 – (From Left to Right) Melissa Reed as Edward Kynaston’s “Desdemona” (Production Photo), Edward Kynaston’s “Desdemona” (Costume Rendering)	39
Figure 3.4 – (From Left to Right) Melissa Reed as Edward Kynaston’s “The Silent Lady” (Production Photo), Melissa Reed as Edward Kynaston at Court (Production Photo), Melissa Reed as Edward Kynaston performing in the Cock Pit Tavern (Production Photo)	41
Figure 3.5 – (From Left to Right) Thomas Betterton’s “Othello” (Costume Rendering), James Costello as Thomas Betterton’s “Othello” (Production Photo)	43
Figure 3.6 – (From Left to Right) Kate Dzvonik as Margaret Hughes (Production Photo), Margaret Hughes (Costume Rendering)	44
Figure 3.7 – (From Left to Right) Laurie Roberts as Maria (Production Photo), Maria (Costume Rendering)	45
Figure 3.8 – (From Left to Right) Josiah Laubenstein as Samuel Pepys (Production Photo), Samuel Pepys (Costume Rendering)	46
Figure 3.9 – The Court of King Charles II (Production Photo)	47
Figure 4.1 – (From Left to Right) Hamlet (Costume Rendering), James Costello as Hamlet (Production Photo)	48
Figure 4.2 – (From Left to Right) Claudius (Costume Rendering), Gertrude (Costume Rendering)	52
Figure 4.3 – Richard Willis as Claudius and Melissa Reed as Gertrude (Production Photo)	53
Figure 4.4 – (From Left to Right) Polonius (Costume Rendering), Ophelia (Costume Rendering), Laertes (Costume Rendering)	54
Figure 4.5 – (From Left to Right) Trey Hobbs as Polonius (Production Photo), Laurie Roberts as Ophelia (Production Photo), Cory Lipman as Laertes (Production Photo)	55
Figure 4.6 – Asylum Guards (From Left to Right) Asylum Guards (Costume Rendering), Liam MacDougall as Bernardo (Production Photo)	56
Figure 4.7 – The (From Left to Right) The Ghost of King Hamlet (Costume Rendering), Freddie Powers as the Ghost (Production Photo)	57

Figure 4.8 – The Players (Costume Rendering).....	58
Figure 4.9 – (From Left to Right) Liam MacDougall as the Player King (Production Photo), John Floyd as the Player Queen (Production Photo)	59
Figure 4.10 – (From Left to Right) The Gravedigger (Costume Rendering), Trey Hobbs as the Gravedigger (Production Photo).....	60
Figure 4.11 – (From Left to Right) Horatio (Costume Rendering), Kate Dzvonik as Horatio (Production Photo).....	61
Figure 4.12 – (From Left to Right) Guildenstern (Costume Rendering), Rosencrantz (Costume Rendering)	62
Figure 4.13- (From Left to Right) Josiah Laubenstein as Guildenstern (Production Photo), Leeanna Rubin as Rosencrantz (Production Photo).....	62
Figure 4.14 – Hamlet and his Father’s Ghost (Production Photo).....	64

INTRODUCTION

“See. That man is playing the part of a beggar.... When we look at him we recall, not any particular beggar, but all beggars we have ever seen or read about.... He is dressed, not like a real beggar, but like a painting of a beggar. No, that’s not quite it, but as he stands there or moves about we are continually reminded of great paintings”¹

Robert Edmond Jones
The Dramatic Imagination

Theater has always been a communicative and collaborative art. The director communicates his goals for the production to the actors and to the design team. The actors communicate verbally and physically with the audience during the performance. The design team provides unspoken communicative support for the actors through their choices and resulting “special world” of the play. It is the job of the designer to help communicate the nature and personality of the character through their clothing. In *The Dramatic Imagination*, Robert Edmond Jones discusses how characters, such as a beggar, are not dressed realistically, but like an artistic interpretation of the character, a representation of all beggars, almost like a painting. This artistic interpretation is more important than reality because each audience member comes to see a play with a different reality, experiences, and memories. It is the job of the costume designer to paint one image of a character that communicates their essence to each and every audience member. They must be able to look at the actors onstage and recognize, even before the first word of the play is uttered, who that character represents. The character must also fit within the special world of the play while maintaining this communication with the

audience. The special world of the play and the decisions made to support it must facilitate communication of character to the audience. When “special worlds” are created and choices are made for visual appeal rather than supporting the script, communication with the audience is broken and the design no longer serves its purpose. But when a “special world” supports and provides clarity to the script, the communication between audience and stage remains intact, and the production itself becomes a wonderful piece of artwork.

When designing a show, my goal is always to serve the “special world” of the play and the director’s intentions for it by communicating character to every patron effectively through clothing. During my graduate career I had the privilege of designing four diverse and unique shows, each with its own “special world.” After initial design concept discussions with the director, I always turn first to visual research for each individual character as well as for overall concept and mood images. I usually request a second research meeting with a director, trying to see which images immediately jump out at him/her and why. These images inspire my costume designs, sketches, and renderings and well as each line, color, and texture specifically chosen to convey a character’s personality, mood, relationships, driving forces, and role in society.

Initial designs may change, whether slightly or drastically, but the costumes should always support the talents of the actors, only enhancing their performances and character development. It’s very easy to get carried away with the design, whether holding tight to a concept when it’s no longer appropriate, or moving too quickly away from one inclination before it is fully realized, but the final product – the combination of costumes, sets, lights, and sound – should support the intention and message of the play

in a manner relevant to your audience. As R.E. Jones states in his book The Dramatic Imagination, “As we work we must seek not for self-expression or for performance for its own sake, but only to establish the dramatist's intention, knowing that when we have succeeded in doing so audiences will say to themselves, not, This is beautiful, This is charming, This is splendid, but – This is true”²

¹ Jones, Robert Edmond. The Dramatic Imagination: Reflections and Speculations on the Art of the Theatre, (New York: Theatre Arts, 1941) 33.

² Jones, Robert Edmond. The Dramatic Imagination: Reflections and Speculations on the Art of the Theatre, (New York: Theatre Arts, 1941) 76.

CHAPTER 1

27 WAGONS FULL OF COTTON

27 Wagons Full of Cotton was performed in USC's Longstreet Theater October 5-9, 2011 as part of "An Evening of One Acts". The design team was made up of Amy Holtcamp (Director), Brad Cozby (Scenic Design), Christine Jacky (Lighting Design), April Andrew (Costume Design), Valerie Pruett (Wig & Make-up Design), Aaron Pelzek (Sound Design) and Jane Hearn (Production Manager.)

Tennessee Williams is one of the most influential playwrights of the 20th century. Born in Mississippi, his dysfunctional home and family life provided the influence for most of his works, which are regarded as the classics of the American stage. Although *The Glass Menagerie* and *A Streetcar Named Desire* are the most famous of his works, Williams also wrote multiple short one-act plays and essays throughout his career. *27 Wagons Full of Cotton* was written as a one-act by Williams in 1946, and was referred to by him as a "Mississippi Delta Comedy." In it, Jake Meighan, a crooked cotton gin owner, burns down the mill of Silva Vicarro, a plantation manager and rival in the cotton business. Vicarro, who knows what happened but cannot yet prove it, seeks revenge by raping Jake's young, frail, delicate wife, Flora.

After reading the play, I was not sure whether or not I liked the play. As with many of Tennessee William's works, sexual violence plays a dominant role in the plot. I understand why it is important to tell these stories, but the brutality of exchanging one's wife for a business venture was a disturbing thought to me. My initial reading of the play also raised the following questions: What had driven Jake to the extreme reaction of setting fire to the cotton gin? Why is so much physical violence present between Flora and Jake in their marriage? Why does Flora act like and often speak like a child? Is it Jake's intention to offer his wife to Vicarro as part of his "good neighbor policy"³? How has Flora changed at the end of the play? After talking with the director, Amy Holtcamp, I came to understand the world of the play she was hoping to create, subtly blurring

fantasy and reality. In their fantasy world, violence is sexy and childlike ways are a method of flirtation.

Jake Meighan is all about control and domination in his private and personal life and he will do whatever it takes to achieve control. He owns a cotton gin, but has been low on work since the Syndicate Plantation built their own gin, kicked sharecroppers off their lands, and essentially monopolized the ginning in their area. This lack of control drives him to set fire to a competing gin to generate more business for himself. The new business puts him back in control of his situation. Jake also controls and dominates his wife Flora. When she stands her ground, telling him that he went off in the Chevy after dinner, he grabs her throat and twists her arm until she agrees to go along with his story. He calls Flora “Baby,” suggesting that if he were not there to look after her, she would not survive on her own. He even controls what she does with her own body. It is Jake who willingly suggests the “good neighbor policy” to Silva Vicarro and does nothing to prevent Flora from being raped for the rest of the summer.

Jake’s wife Flora Meighan is his “Baby Doll,” but she is unsure of her roll in life. She is considerably younger than Jake, a large woman but delicate, and she sees her girlish ways as a means of flirtation. She thinks that Jake finds it sexy when she behaves like a child, even talking in a childish voice and feigning innocence. Although appearing coquettish, when Jake becomes violent and rough it arouses her. When Silva Vicarro enters, she flirts with him as well, trying to use her wiles to escape his questioning about the fire. Silva pulls her into a more adult role with his questioning and she is then unsure of how to behave. He also suggests motherhood to Flora, telling her that babies save their mothers from being empty by giving them something to hold on to and care for. In

the final scene, Flora's fantasy world has been shattered. Silva's rape of her turns her baby doll ideas upside-down; the violent ways of her husband are no longer sexy and alluring. She realizes that she is no longer a child, and contemplates how to become a mother, but is ultimately unsure of how to proceed.

Silva Vicarro is a New Orleans native of Italian descent and the manager of the Syndicate Plantation. His motto in life is "an eye for an eye," or as he puts it, "tit for tat."⁴ Although Jake Meighan constantly tries to control his situation, Silva clearly holds the most powerful position. When Silva enters, it is clear that he is suspicious of the loss of his gin and has come to the Meighan gin to find out the truth. Silva interrogates Flora, becoming increasingly controlling, animalistic, and seductive, like a spider coaxing a fly into its web. He understands what Jake Meighan means by the "good neighbor policy" and willingly takes advantage of it. In his mind, the brutal rape of Flora is justified and revenges his burnt down cotton gin. Silva also goes a little farther than just "tit for tat" when he makes it clear that he will take advantage of Flora's hospitality for the rest of the harvest season.

In my design for the production, I wanted to give Silva a very powerful and authoritative look. Dark brown riding pants, a cream colored button up shirt, suspenders, knee-high lace-up boots and a hat gave him a lean and strong look. The subtle vertical stripes enhance his long and lean physique. His colors are neutrals, black and different shades of brown to show that he is an authoritative businessman. The only personal detail in his wardrobe is his catholic medallion which he wears on a silver chain around his neck. The necklace hints at his Italian heritage as well as echoes his name Silva (silver). Contrastingly, Jake Meighan's overall look was scruffy and practical, since he

works alongside his employees and is hands on enough himself to engineer the fire at the Syndicate plantation.



Figure 1.1 – Andy Hernandez as Silva Viccaro (Production Photo)

Drawing inspiration from photographs of cotton gin owners of the 1940's, I dressed Jake in distressed overalls and heavy work boots for the entire show and indicated the passage of time by changing the shirt underneath. The first shirt was a bit nicer than the other since the script indicates the couple is going into town. Jake removes his plain work shirt for the final scene, appearing only in his undershirt and overalls since he has been working all day.



Figure 1.2 – Don Russell as Jake Meighan (Production Photo)

Flora Meighan's clothing was first and foremost a reflection of her name, which she shares with the Roman goddess of flowers. Also influencing her clothes are her girly flirtatious ways. Her first dress was pink seersucker with blue flowers, and her second dress was purple chiffon with pink flowers. I wanted her colors to reflect the light and thin nature of watercolors, reflecting the fantasy world that she lives in. The silhouette of her dresses as well as her hairstyles nod to children's fashions of the day: big bouncy curls with a bow in her hair, crinolines underneath her skirts, and large lacy collars. She

wears cream colored pumps for the first two scenes. For the final scene, following her rape by Mr. Viccaro, Flora emerges clothed only in her slip, barefoot, and clutching a bloody sheet. Since her fantasy world has been broken, her slip is simple, her hair is pulled back off of her face, and special effects make-up provides scrapes, hand marks, and a bloody lip to evidence the crime that has just taken place.



Figure 1.3 – Amanda Forstrom as Flora Meighan (Production Photo)

My original designs changed a little bit over the course of production. For Silva Viccaro, I originally wanted him to wear jodhpurs, but we found that they did not enhance his physical shape as we hoped. We used the riding pants instead to give him a long, lean look. For Jake Meighan, I envisioned his character having a scruffy face, not

shaving every day, but *27 Wagons Full of Cotton* was only one of four one-acts that were performed at the Tennessee Williams' Festival, and the actor playing Jake was double cast in another role which required him to be clean-shaven. Flora's look was the one that I was the most dissatisfied with. This was mostly due to the actress' size. In the script, there are multiple references to how big and large of a woman Flora is, but our actress was very thin. I constructed body padding for her, as much as possible without looking out of place with her thin arms and legs. Ultimately, lines in the play were dropped or changed to accommodate our actress' small frame.

Set designer Brad Cosby and lighting designer Christine Jackey were particularly challenged in this show, which contained 4 different one-act plays, each requiring a different look and feeling. For *27 Wagons Full of Cotton*, Brad created a southern front porch, complete with a rusty gliding bench and worn wood floor. Christine transformed this porch from morning, to afternoon, and to night with lighting effects, and together with the costumes, our "special world," while minimal in pieces, reflected the southern style of Tennessee Williams.



Figure 1.4 – 27 Wagons Full of Cotton (Production Photo)

³ Williams, Tennessee, 27 Wagons Full of Cotton and Other One-act Plays, (Norfolk, CT: New Directions, 1953) 12.

⁴ Williams, Tennessee, 27 Wagons Full of Cotton and Other One-act Plays, (Norfolk, CT: New Directions, 1953) 17.

CHAPTER 2

POLAROID STORIES

Polaroid Stories was performed in USC's Longstreet Theater November 11-19, 2011. The design team was made up of Steven Pearson (Director and Sound Design), Nic Ularu (Scenic Design), Marc Hurst (Lighting Design), April Andrew (Costume Design), Valerie Pruett (Wig & Make-up Design), and K.Dale White (Production Manager.)

Polaroid Stories was written by Naomi Iizuka in 1997 and was originally commissioned by En Garde Arts in New York. Born in Japan, Iizuka grew up in Japan, Indonesia, Holland, and Washington D.C., and her multicultural background largely influences her work. In *Polaroid Stories* she blends the harsh realities facing today's street youth with classical mythology to create a unique and theatrical world. The audience "journeys into a world where myth-making fulfills a fierce need for transcendence, where storytelling has the power to transform a reality in which characters' lives are continually threatened, devalued and effaced."⁵ Not all the stories told by the characters are true, but, explains diarist-of-the-street Jim Grimsley, "All these stories and lies add up to something like the truth."⁶ Inspired by Ovid's *Metamorphoses* as well as interviews with street kids, *Polaroid Stories* takes place on an abandoned pier at the edge of city, "a waystop for dreamers, dealers and desperados, a no-man's land where runaways seek camaraderie, refuge, and escape."⁷ These young people live on the fringe of society and, like their Greek equivalents, are motivated by desires that consume their lives.

On my initial reading of the play, I was struck by the non-linear structure, which also left me a little confused about the dramatic action within. After a few more readings, and thoroughly outlining each vignette, the more I understood, the more I enjoyed the complexity of the stories. The script conjured up mental portraits of homeless youth, feelings of disorientation, emotional pain, helplessness, and pictures of an abandoned

building. I was also struck by the theatricality of the combination of music, sound, and lights present in the script. At my first meeting with the director, Professor Steve Pearson, we talked about how he envisioned these characters as real people, with realistic clothing, not costumes. He wanted them to look as real as possible, and make sure that the audience would understand that everyone has a story that is worth telling. We see these people all the time, we know that they exist in our lives, but yet we are still unable to comprehend the challenges of their daily life. Professor Pearson wanted to make sure that we tell their story. He also pointed out to me that homeless youth fall into two categories, runaway and throwaway and that their four methods of survival are prostitution, drugs, begging, and stealing. These ways of living and varying levels of experience create a hierarchy among the characters. Each one has a means of making money and none of them are truly homeless, except possibly Echo.

For my overall design concept, I decided to go with a “bruised” color palette, burgundy, olive green, dark blue, browns, grays, and blacks, to reflect the bruised and wounded nature of these characters. These colors were accented by pops of bright color, neon yellow and green, similar to those seen in urban graffiti images. I began my process by looking at images of street youth and runaways and my immediate observation was how they personalize all their clothing. Almost all of them form an individual style of fashion with clothing that they acquire. Into this personalized fashion, I tried to incorporate multiple layers and subtle Greek icons and symbols as a nod to the characters’ mythic counterparts.

Polaroid Stories was a very unique show and a very unique design experience for me because the nature and broadness of these characters allowed for a

little actor-input into the design. The characters are left up to so much individual interpretation, that this was almost necessary to capture their true essence. I asked the actors to send me images that they thought reflected the essence of the characters they were setting out to portray. I edited these suggestions, keeping in mind the look of the show as a whole as well as the world of the play we were setting out to create.

The most powerful character in the play is G (zeus, hades). According to Greek myth, Zeus is the king of the gods who rules Mt. Olympus. He seduced the mortal Semele and fathered a child with her, Dionysus. Hades is the king of the underworld. The character of G embodies both Zeus and Hades, with no distinction made between the two in the play's action. G has been on the streets the longest; he has the most experience. He makes his money from dealing drugs, and unfortunately has lost the woman he loved to them. G talks about how Persephone/Semele was his "lady love" ⁸ and how painful it was for him when she left him. He also seems very weary of his situation, telling Eurydice that all he wants is a good night's sleep without having to watch his back. Not afraid to use violence, he gives Eurydice a knife and tells her, "it's about getting out alive." ⁹

I gave G (zeus, hades) a sleek and authoritative look in dark colors that would allow him to blend in with his surroundings, coming in and out of view with ease, appearing and disappearing at will. I achieved this with a burgundy hooded jacket, black pants, and a black leather jacket. G's lucky charm necklace featured a lightning bolt design. His look was sleek, powerful, and mysterious. Sunglasses added an element of mystery to his character; the others are never sure if he is watching or not.



Figure 2.1 – (From Left to Right) Don Russell as G (Production Photo), G (Costume Rendering)

Persephone/Semele is G's "lady love." In myth, Semele is the mortal mother of Dionysus by Zeus. Zeus told her that he would grant her one wish, but she then demanded that Zeus reveal himself in all his glory as proof of his godhood. Although Zeus begged her not to ask this, she persisted, and he was forced by his oath to comply. He tried to spare her by showing her the smallest of his bolts and the sparsest thunderstorm clouds he could find. Mortals, however, cannot look upon Zeus without being burned, and she perished, consumed in lightning-ignited flame. Persephone was

abducted by Hades and was made the queen of the underworld. She is also associated with spring. The character of Persephone/Semele in *Polaroid Stories* is such that Semele is the woman that Persephone used to be. Persephone transforms into Semele and vice versa throughout the action of the play. Persephone is a former prostitute and the second most powerful person. Her dependence on the drugs supplied to her by G drive her entire world. She is resigned to her fate and has no hope of escaping her situation. Semele is the girl G used to know and used to love. She remembers her baby, born with a heart defect, but gave him away in infancy and doesn't know what happened to him.

I decided on a very sexy silhouette with an urban twist. Although two personas are present in this character, the only look we see in the show is Persephone's. She and G have different color palettes, indicating that they are no longer compatible with each other. Her look is also influenced subtly by the references to salsa music made by her character. Persephone looks at home in the streets: tight-fitting bleached jeans, a lacy purple tank top, and a cropped fitted blue plaid shirt. Flowers in the lace as well as an eagle feather necklace allude to Persephone's mythic identity.



Figure 2.2 – Jessi Noel as Persephone/Semele (Production Photo)

Orpheus, accompanied by his violent alter-ego Tereus, is Eurydice's counterpart. The Greek Orpheus was a legendary musician, poet, and prophet who was married to Eurydice. When Eurydice died, he followed her to Hades and played his lyre to put the guardian of Hades to sleep. Eurydice was allowed to return with him under the condition that he must walk in front of her and not look back until both had reached the upper world. He could not help but turn around to gaze on her face, and she vanished back into the underworld, lost to him until they were reunited in death. Tereus was a Thracian king

who desired his wife's sister, raped her, and then cut out her tongue to keep her silent.

Orpheus (also Tereus) is motivated by his love for Eurydice and his need for control. He is a hunter, controlling and manipulative. He stalks Eurydice, unable to leave her alone and tries to prevent her from crossing over the river of forgetfulness. He tries to attract Eurydice with sweetness, but it soon turns violent. When Philomel witnesses violence between Orpheus and Eurydice, he hunts her down and cuts out her tongue, silencing her song.

Eurydice was an oak nymph in Greek mythology, one of the daughters of Apollo and the wife of Orpheus. A satyr saw her one day and pursued her, but she stepped on a snake and died. Orpheus almost rescued her from the underworld, but was unsuccessful.

In *Polaroid Stories* she is a prostitute who drinks from the river of forgetfulness. She says that she forgets the faces, forgets the names, and forgets how she got all the scars on her “pretty little body.”¹⁰ She wants to leave, become someone famous, but she is caught in a toxic circle, unable to shake her “man like a bad dream”¹¹ who follows her everywhere. Eurydice has many scars, physical and emotional, and although she says she forgets, I believe she carries her memories with her and is constantly burdened by them. The plot of *Polaroid Stories* suggests that the myth of her and Orpheus is now told from her point of view; maybe she did not want to be rescued from Hades.

Both Eurydice and Orpheus' color palette consisted of dark blue, gray, and burgundy. Eurydice's clothing was provocative and revealing, but tattered. She wore layered black and burgundy cutoff tank tops, a blue and burgundy plaid shirt, dark blue shorts, a gray jacket and chain-link tights, which mirror the chain-link fence barrier between her and Orpheus. Her main colors are blue, for the river she crosses, and red, for

the blood that she sheds. Her gray jacket has an appliquéd snake on the back, to indicate the way she was first destroyed. Orpheus has a more militaristic silhouette combined with rocker style: jeans, a brown t-shirt painted with Orpheus' lyre, a red/gray plaid shirt, and a blue military style coat. Gray fingerless gloves and a gray army style cap complete his look.



Figure 2.3 – (From Left to Right) Eurydice (Costume Rendering), Amanda Forstrom as Eurydice (Production Photo)

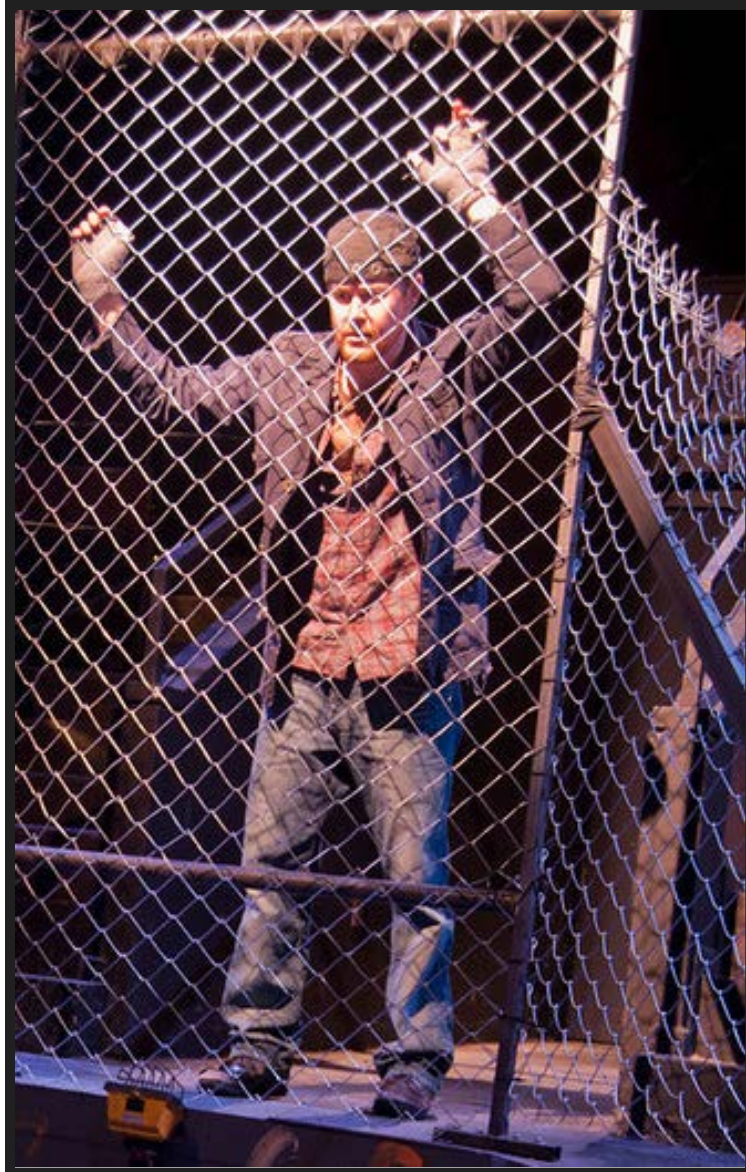


Figure 2.4 – Joe Mallon as Orpheus/Tereus (Production Photo)

Dionysus is the Greek god of the grape harvest, winemaking, and wine; the god of ritual madness and ecstasy. He was the son of Zeus and Semele. When his mother burned, Zeus rescued the fetus and sewed it into his thigh. Dionysus was then known as “twice born.” The character of D(dionysus) is a throwaway child who was raised by a wino who found him on the streets. Of all the characters in *Polaroid Stories*, he seems to be the happiest, only becoming angry when someone challenges his authority or when he

is ripped off. He is a drug dealer, specializing in newer, harder drugs than G. D(dionysus) is below G and Semele in the hierarchy of their world, but seeks greater power and almost comes across a little insecure about his status. He is the only character to state outright that he is a god and needs to be respected and feared.

Philomel is the most vulnerable and most interesting character in the play. She never speaks, only communicating through songs and music. She is the most vulnerable of all the characters and represents their longing to escape their desperate situation. Almost an observer, she is an ancient haunting song, unadorned and childlike, representing nostalgia and longing. She is raped by Tereus who also cuts out her tongue and takes away her means of communication. Her absence in the second act of the play represents the loss of hope from the society. Philomel's name has several different meanings. A Philomel is an instrument similar to a violin and another name for a nightingale. In Greek mythology, Philomela was the princess of Athens. She was raped by Tereus who then cut out her tongue to keep her from telling anyone. The gods changed her into a bird to end her suffering.

D (Dionysus)'s look is the missing link between G and Persephone/Semele. While his clothing is industrial and loose in silhouette, his color palette bridges the gap between his parents' looks. He wore a purple t-shirt, a black striped hoodie, brown cargo pants, and a brown leather jacket. His clothing is dark enough so he can move in and out of light without being seen, but not as easily as G. Chains and jewelry add an edge of hardness to his look. Contrastingly to these three characters, Philomel's clothing looks the most out of place in the world of the play. Her color palette is the lightest, making her the easiest to spot and the most vulnerable. Khaki pants, a light blue shirt, a mauve

knit cap, and a plaid coat give her a slightly vintage look. The length of her coat is the longest, indicating that the world she is currently living in is dragging her down with it.



Figure 2.5 – (From Left to Right) Andy Hernandez as D (Production Photo) and Caroline Wilson as Philomel (Production Photos)

The character of SkinheadBoy (aka Speed Racer, Oklahoma boy) is compared to several Greek characters throughout the script. When he steals D's stash of drugs, Iizuka names him Prometheus, who stole fire from Zeus and gave it to the mortals. When he tricks D, she dubs him the Lydian Sailor, who tricked Dionysus. When he and Skinheadgirl are in the labyrinth, he is Theseus, who, according to Greek mythology, volunteered to kill the Minotaur within, and fell in love with Ariadne. Finally, Skinheadboy is compared to Pentheus. Pentheus was the king of Thebes who banned

worship of Dionysus and imprisoned him. He was dubbed the “Man of Sorrows.” Dionysus escaped from jail and had Pentheus torn limb from limb, some say by his own brother. In the first scene of *Polaroid Stories*, D christens Skinheadboy “Oklahoma Boy” and later calls him “Speed Racer” because of his addiction to speed. Although his name suggests otherwise, Skinheadboy is not a skinhead in the neo-Nazi scene. He has tattoos and steel toed boots. He’s a druggie and a thief who was abused as a young child. His need for drugs motivates him and causes him to eventually leave his girlfriend. After losing her, he commits suicide by jumping off a bridge.

Skinheadgirl (aka Neon Girl) is Skinheadboy’s girlfriend. Her Greek counterpart is Ariadne, the bride of Dionysus who fell in love with Theseus when he came to slay the Minotaur. She gave Theseus a ball of string so he could find his way out of the Minotaur’s labyrinth. Ariadne eloped with Theseus, but died shortly thereafter, possibly on Dionysus’ orders. Neon Girl is a runaway, a thief, and a druggie. She is easily influenced by Skinheadboy, but provides him with a way to escape the streets. Throughout the play, she constantly seems high and unable to find her way, always trying to find someone. She has family and they plan to leave the city to live on their farm. These plans are foiled when she “turns into a star.”¹² This can be interpreted as her death from an overdose.

Skinheadboy and Neon Girl both have elements of skinhead fashion in their looks with a more industrial vibe. Their color palette included black and dark blue with pops of neon color. Skinheadboy’s look includes combat boots, dark jeans, a neon green t-shirt, a blue plaid shirt, suspenders, and a black leather vest. His look is a little sloppier than the other characters, since they refer to him as “Oklahoma Boy,” implying

that he does not entirely fit in yet. Neon Girl's costume incorporated more bright colors than Skinheadboy. A bright yellow tank and double layered neon tights with jean shorts and a personalized black hoodie echo her name. Her hoodie, which when raised provides her with protection, was also adorned with tiny stars, since they are ultimately what she becomes.



Figure 2.6- (From Left to Right) Neon Girl (Costume Rendering), Yvonne Senat as Neon Girl (Production Photo)



Figure 2.7 – Sam Kinsman as Skinheadboy (Production Photo)

Narcissus was a hunter from Thespieae who was renowned for his beauty. He was so proud of his appearance, that when he saw his reflection in a pool of water, he fell in love with it and was unable to leave it. He died there and was transformed into a flower. In *Polaroid Stories*, Narcissus is a gay prostitute who egotistical and conceited. He lives in a fantasy world, talking of friends in high places, money prospects, and how he will have a wonderful singing career. He has a sense of entitlement and changes his shape at

will, like Proteus, the Greek sea god. Though he is actually low in the hierarchy of characters, he thinks himself much higher and talks the same. He is motivated by self gratification, ignoring those who try and get close to him and shunning friends that cannot take him places. He becomes so self- absorbed that he shatters like the mirror he is gazing into.

Echo is Narcissus' only friend in *Polaroid Stories* and the weakest character. She is a newer member to the streets and the only character who is completely homeless and alone. Soft, reserved, and hooded, she is closing in on herself, almost becoming invisible. She wants so badly to communicate and become closer to Narcissus, but his vanity and her inability to speak for herself until the end of the play prevents her from doing so. The Greek Echo was an Oread, or nymph, who loved her own voice and enticed Zeus. Hera punished her by taking away her own voice, except in foolish repetition of another's shouted words. She fell in love with Narcissus, but was spurned since he was in love with his own reflection. Heartbroken, she spent the rest of her life in lonely glens pining away for the love she never knew, crying until all that was left was her own voice.

Narcissus' silhouette was very tight and sexy, since he would want to show off his body, while also being somewhat androgynous. Tight dark wash skinny jeans, a deep v-neck teal t-shirt, a personalized casual blazer and red alligator shoes show off his sexy body. His teal shirt, painted with a narcissus flower, and a Greek vine choker give a subtle nod, to the Greek myth. He is the most fashionable character despite his low status in the society's hierarchy. Echo's clothing is the plainest and dirtiest of all: brown corduroy pants and an oversized gray hoodie. These allow her to fade into the

background, to be seen and not heard. Her hood is up the entire show; she is not confident enough and does not feel safe enough to lower it. She is closing in on herself and fading away.



Figure 2.8 – (From Left to Right) Liam MacDougall as Narcissus (*Production Photo*), Narcissus (*Costume Rendering*)



Figure 2.9 – Catherine Friesen as Echo (Production Photo)

For the most part, my realized costumes look almost exactly like my original renderings. The character's look that changed the most from my initial design was Persephone/Semele. Her final look was truly a collaborative effort between myself, the director, and the actor. While I had initially given Persephone a vulnerable and feminine look, in a tight-fitting skirt with layered tank tops and a cropped, hooded leather jacket.

This look did not match up with the actress' portrayal of Persephone, which was harder and more edgy. The director sent me a picture of a look they had discussed in rehearsal, and we were able to compromise, while still keeping my original silhouette intact. The final look was much stronger and more successful than the one I originally designed.

The set designed by Nic Ularu reflected a collapsing overpass. Just as the situations the characters experience are collapsing around them, their surroundings appeared to be collapsing as well. The dark and ominous lighting design by Marc Hurst allowed the characters to move in and out of view with ease, and created a sense of foreboding. The neon pops of color from the costumes made sure the characters were visible in their dark world, but their distressed nature matched them to the corrosive textures present throughout their world. Overall, I was pleased with the final look of the show and the world that we were able to create, having served this difficult and complicated script, and achieved the goals of the playwright.



Figure 2.10 – *Polaroid Stories* (Production Photo)

⁵ Iizuka, Naomi, and Ovid, *Polaroid Stories: An Adaptation of Ovid's Metamorphoses*, (Woodstock, IL: Dramatic Pub., 1999) Back Cover.

⁶ Iizuka, Naomi, and Ovid, *Polaroid Stories: An Adaptation of Ovid's Metamorphoses*, (Woodstock, IL: Dramatic Pub., 1999) Back Cover.

⁷ Iizuka, Naomi, and Ovid, *Polaroid Stories: An Adaptation of Ovid's Metamorphoses*, (Woodstock, IL: Dramatic Pub., 1999) Back Cover.

⁸ Iizuka, Naomi, and Ovid, *Polaroid Stories: An Adaptation of Ovid's Metamorphoses*, (Woodstock, IL: Dramatic Pub., 1999) 29.

⁹ Iizuka, Naomi, and Ovid, *Polaroid Stories: An Adaptation of Ovid's Metamorphoses*, (Woodstock, IL: Dramatic Pub., 1999) 79.

¹⁰ Iizuka, Naomi, and Ovid, *Polaroid Stories: An Adaptation of Ovid's Metamorphoses*, (Woodstock, IL: Dramatic Pub., 1999) 15.

¹¹ Iizuka, Naomi, and Ovid, *Polaroid Stories: An Adaptation of Ovid's Metamorphoses*, (Woodstock, IL: Dramatic Pub., 1999) 12.

¹² Iizuka, Naomi, and Ovid, *Polaroid Stories: An Adaptation of Ovid's Metamorphoses*, (Woodstock, IL: Dramatic Pub., 1999) 62.

CHAPTER 3

COMPLEAT FEMALE STAGE BEAUTY

Compleat Female Stage Beauty was performed in USC's Longstreet Theater November 9-17, 2012. The design team was made up of Gary Logan (Director), Cao Xuemei (Scenic Design), Jim Hunter (Lighting Design), April Andrew (Costume Design), Valerie Pruett (Wig & Make-up Design), Matthew Nielson (Sound Design), and Kasey Beard (Stage Manager)

Compleat Female Stage Beauty was written in 1999 by Jeffrey Hatcher and later adapted into a screenplay under the title *Stage Beauty* in 2004. Inspired in part by true people and events, *LA Weekly* describes this story as “a compelling take on the issues of sexual identity and artistic freedom now entrenched in our own culture.”¹³ Set in the spectacle, scandal, and upheaval of King Charles II's English Restoration, the play's action follows actor Edward Kynaston, who famed diarist Samuel Pepys acclaimed the most beautiful woman on the English stage, and his fall from celebrity into obscurity. The story begins with Kynaston at the height of his fame, portraying Shakespeare's Desdemona opposite Thomas Betterton's Othello. His graceful feminine performance steals the show and casts doubts on his true gender among some of his silly and frilly admirers. He even fools the drunken nobleman Sir Charles Sedley, until the fop reaches beneath his skirts, furious to discover his true gender. Kynaston increases his enemies once more when he refuses to act with female actresses, not knowing the king's mistress Nell Gwynn was among the hopeful auditionees. Nell uses her influence over King Charles to inspire a new law – “No He shall ere again upon an English stage play She”.¹⁴ His whole life ruined and without work, Kynaston performs in the seediest of theatres while the rest of England discovers a lack of feminine grace and poised performances among the new herd of female actresses. Rescued from his sewer, Kynaston returns to the stage as Othello, his ultimate redemption as he re-imagines his personal heroine and

coaches actress Margaret Hughes to a beautiful and almost too-real performance.

When I learned I would be designing this show, I was particularly excited about the costume possibilities within the play, but was a little concerned with the sheer number of looks demanded by the script. Not only is the script set in the opulent court of the English Restoration, but we also see theatrical costumes within that time period. The characters in the show, all based on real historical figures, range from kitchen maids and ruffians, to the lords and ladies of the court, to King Charles II himself. Within the script, we visit the king's court, the gardens, two different theatre companies, backstage of these theater companies, the king's private chambers, a Turkish bath, a coffeehouse, a squalid raucous tavern, an inn, and an artist's studio, with each location stipulating a specific look. While talking with director Gary Logan, we knew we needed to establish three distinct categories of costumes and wigs for our production: Theatrical Costumes, Court Finery, and Working Class. The theatrical costumes must be the most lavish in the entire show, but still distinctly separate from the fancy dress of court. While mirroring the silhouette and style of the period, they must exist just far enough outside the rules of society, whether through embellishment, proportion, or richness of color. The fine clothes of the court should be beautiful and lavish, mirroring the king and his mistress – the fashion icons of the day – and adorned with buttons and ribbons. The working class clothes are much simpler while keeping the same basic period silhouette, and adding interest through texture. As we began talking about a color palate for the show, I initially brought up two of the characters we associate with a fruit – Desdemona cherishes her strawberry handkerchief and Nell Gwynn formerly worked as an orange girl. This spawned a discussion about the hidden sexuality of fruit and, by selecting inspirational

fruits to associate with certain characters, we developed the deep, rich color palate of the upper class and aristocracy, and then muted these colors for our working class characters.

One of the wonderful things about *Compleat Female Stage Beauty* is that all its characters are historical figures with ample visual historical research available. While researching the silhouette of the fashion of the Restoration, we decided to push our fashions ahead a little bit. Rather than the feminine look of petticoat breeches and a bolero vest, we chose the slimmer and more masculine cassock coat and breeches look for our male characters, save for our silly fashion fop Sir Charles Sedley. All male court characters donned periwigs with the distinguishing peaks at the crown. Working class male characters used their own hair. Our female characters all wore a conical corset and bumrolls to give a period look to their late Restoration gowns with a chemise base, petticoat, and gown with the sides buttoned back to expose the underskirt. The ladies also wore wigs styles mostly into a “hurly burly” style with flat oval hats to complete the period style.

Historical fashions were usually dictated by the royal family, so I wanted to make sure that King Charles and his mistress Nell Gwynn luxuriously epitomized our chosen silhouette. Charles revels in the lavishness of court, sponsoring expensive theatrical productions starring Nell, but also truly accepts his responsibilities and duties as king. For Charles’ regal court look, I was inspired by the “berries and cream” colors of the British flag. He wore a lavish pair of red and gold petticoat breeches draped in yards of ribbon with a blue brocade cassock coat with glitzy gold trim, lace, and pearl buttons. The petticoat breeches gave him a richer look than a slimmer breech because they contain more fabric. His gold shoes had a red heel, the mark of a dandy of the day.

Mistress Nell Gwynn is a common girl who has risen to the top of society because of her feminine wiles. She reveals her common past as an orange girl to the court, even demonstrating her sales call to the embarrassment of the Prime Minister. Though common by birth, she demonstrates a strong, intelligent, and realistic view of herself, but is not above manipulating the king with sexual favors for her own gain. Her past occupation inspired me for her orange and tangerine court gown. I designed her underskirt with a vertical stripe with orange, gold and tan with a gown of orange brocade. Her sheer sleeves were embroidered with tiny orange flowers and green leaves. Both Charles and Nell change costumes many times throughout the show, but their level of finery remains constant and sets them apart from everyone.



Figure 3.1 – (From Left to Right) Cory Lipman as King Charles II (Production Photo), King Charles II (Costume Rendering), Nell Gwynn (Costume Rendering), Leeanna Rubin as Nell Gwynn (Production Photo)

While the royals truly sport the finest fashions of the day, Charles Sedley would argue otherwise. A silly, but conniving nobleman, he is the only character to openly discuss his fashion onstage, remarking that a boot scuff is a terrible thing indeed. The pompous and frilly pineapple inspired his look of purple and yellow patterned petticoat breeches, complete with a self-flattering codpiece and a matching short bolero jacket. I added the codpiece, traditionally characteristic of Renaissance fashion, at the suggestion of the director, which hinted at possible underlying sexual insecurities. It also added another layer of humor to have that masculine form among so many ribbons and lace. In fact, his costume contained the most ribbons and bows, and his purple high heeled shoes also had red heels.



Figure 3.2 – (From Left to Right) Sir Charles Sedley (Costume Rendering), Stephen Ingle as Sir Charles Sedley (Production Photo)

The most complicated costume track was, naturally, Edward Kynaston, with ten different looks including various stages of undress and spanning all three categories of costumes. His looks had to seamlessly transition from male to female, keeping in mind the plays theme of blurring gender lines, while the vivacity of his color helped us trace his social status and confidence in himself. He begins the play as Desdemona in a theatrical strawberry inspired gown I designed of floral embroidered silk with a sheer green chemise and topped off with a larger than life blonde wig. We constructed this dress so that he could undress onstage down to his chemise. We even caught a glimpse of his cotton wig cap as he removed his blonde hair onstage.



Figure 3.3 – (From Left to Right) Melissa Reed as Edward Kynaston’s “Desdemona” (Production Photo), Edward Kynaston’s “Desdemona” (Costume Rendering)

Kynaston's next costume transitioned from female to a man visiting court, and I chose a rich brown brocade cassock coat and breeches look with a periwig. In the next scene, Kynaston returns to his theatrical world, prepares to play in "The Silent Lady", and is a man playing a woman who is pretending to be a man. Keeping with the strawberry color palate, I selected rose pink breeches, an embroidered vest, a pink and green cravat and a black tricorn hat with pink feathers, and his brown wig sparkles with gold glitter. After Sedley humiliates him during his performance, Kynaston satirically impersonates the fop in his next performance by wearing a more ridiculous copy of Sedley's purple and yellow petticoat breeches, to which I added a quite unflattering codpiece. When we next see Kynaston, I removed all color from his clothing to indicate his fall from fame and costumed him in a plain textured gray and brown wool coat with brown breeches and no wig. At his lowest, Kynaston performs in the Cock Pit Tavern, once again wearing female clothes, but while these filthy rags I picked, complete with dingy bloomers and merkin underneath the skirt, may once have been beautiful, they certainly are not anymore. I wanted this dress to be a decimated copy of Kynaston's original Desdemona costume, indicating his refusal to accept his new life and move on rather than clinging to his beautiful past. Kynaston's seamstress Maria rescues him from this gutter and I wanted to strip Kynaston down to his plain cotton undergarments to create vulnerability, for him to bare more flesh and more soul than he has ever before, and to provide a clean slate as he searches to find his new identity. In the final scene, Kynaston finds his new identity and his confidence in himself onstage as Othello in a costume designed in vibrant rust colored silk Arabic robe and a burgundy turban.



Figure 3.4 – (From Left to Right) Melissa Reed as Edward Kynaston’s “The Silent Lady” (Production Photo), Melissa Reed as Edward Kynaston at Court (Production Photo), Melissa Reed as Edward Kynaston performing in the Cock Pit Tavern (Production Photo)

In our production, we faced a unique challenge with the role of Kynaston, in which Gary Logan cast a woman, Melissa Peters. This decision cast Melissa into a theatrical reality – having to play opposite one’s gender. In this way she was able to identify with Kynaston’s struggle and brought a deeper understanding to his character. Upon hearing of the casting decisions, numerous logistical problems flooded in. My main concern was the audience truly believing that she was a male character onstage, especially since Kynaston dresses and undresses for intimate scenes so often onstage. After talking with Melissa about the changes she was making vocally and through movement, we decided to band down her chest and construct a boy-shaped body pad. For Kynaston’s roles as female characters, a pair of bean-filled falsies filled out her dresses and allowed her to remove them onstage to further cement the audience’s belief

in Kynaston's masculinity. Due to Melissa's petite stature, we did not have many male clothes in our stock that would fit her, and consequentially built almost all of her looks from scratch, taking care not to overwhelm her with trim and ribbon. As a designer, this was a dream to have my ideals realized without the limitations of stock, but this task put a lot of strain on the costume shop. Normally our shop builds ten percent of the clothing for one show, but, with the demands of this show, we built twenty percent of the costumes with tremendous results.

One of the most important lessons I learned during this process was the importance of organization within designing a show. Since this show was constructed in a compacted build time slot, I tried to get as much work done ahead of time as possible. I maintained a detailed "Costume Bible" with sections for each character complete with fabric swatch sheets, renderings, and notes helped me communicate efficiently with everyone. I also maintained a detailed pieces list of every item in the show to make sure nothing went missing and that every look was complete. I learned how to organize a wardrobe crew including wig changers to make sure everyone had assistance during important changes.

Compleat Female Stage Beauty was a beautiful and compelling show. The set designed by Cao Xumei clearly delineated each of our locations, drawing inspiration from fun house mirrors and the seven deadly sins. Jim Hunter's lights established the mood of each scene and followed Kynaston on his spiral downward. Combined with the costumes, we had three parts of our "special world" – the theatrical world, the regality of court life, and the underworld of the taverns. On opening night I was completely

exhausted, but so proud of myself and my wonderful shop for supporting me through this difficult, but rewarding process.



Figure 3.5 – (From Left to Right) Thomas Betterton’s “Othello” (Costume Rendering), James Costello as Thomas Betterton’s “Othello” (Production Photo)



Figure 3.6 – (From Left to Right) Kate Dzvoniik as Margaret Hughes (Production Photo), Margaret Hughes (Costume Rendering)



Figure 3.7– (From Left to Right) Laurie Roberts as Maria (Production Photo), Maria (Costume Rendering)



Figure 3.8 – (From Left to Right) Josiah Laubenstein as Samuel Pepys (Production Photo), Samuel Pepys (Costume Rendering)



Figure 3.9 – *The Court of King Charles II* (Production Photo)

¹³ Estell, Lovell, III. "Compleat Female Stage Beauty." *LA Weekly*. LP, 1 May 2008. Web.
<<http://www.laweekly.com/2008-05-01/calendar/compleat-female-stage-beauty/>>.

¹⁴ Hatcher, Jeffry, Compleat Female Stage Beauty. (New York, NY: Dramatists Play Service, 2006) 46.

CHAPTER 4

HAMLET

Hamlet was performed in USC's Drayton Hall April 18-28 2014. The design team was made up of Robert Richmond (Director), Jim Hunter (Scenic and Lighting Design), April Andrew (Costume Design), Valerie Pruett (Wig & Make-up Design), Britt Sandusky (Sound Design), Casey Kaleba (Fight Choreography), and Katie Smith (Stage Manager)

Arguably the most important English language play ever written, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* was a wonderful finale to my graduate education. During my first meeting with director Robert Richmond, we had originally planned a colorful, outdoor, classical Elizabethan style production. However, after being told that the production was moved indoors to a proscenium stage, Robert instead wanted to explore what madness truly is and how mental diseases are accepted and portrayed in our society. So many times in history, society wrongly convicted and incarcerated those deemed "dangerous to society" rather than learning about mental health and how to treat its disorders. Often, patients in these asylums received torture and experimentation rather than actual treatment. Inspired by works like *American Horror Story: Asylum*, *Stigmata*, and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, we created a theatrical world for our characters who, as inmates in an asylum, are performing Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, when the lines blur and their theatrical performance shifts to reality.

Two distinct categories of people exist in this world - insiders and outsiders - the difference between which is clearly evidenced by their dress. This asylum may have once been functioning within the state system, but the inmates now form a hierarchical system amongst themselves, free from outside control, and the characters each inmate portrays mirror their place in this hierarchy, sometimes even magnifying the psychological disorders they suffer from. This dark, archaic, and deteriorated world inside the asylum exudes fear, insecurity, and isolation. Pulling from materials accessible

to the inmates, I drew inspiration from padded cells, leather straps, straitjackets, and medical equipment when designing each character/inmates unique mix of modern and period silhouette, keeping within a neutral, but corroded color palate. To compliment the angst and tension inside the asylum, I chose a 1940s film noir style for the outside world, allowing for more muted pops of color and a powerful and masculine silhouette for both male and female characters. Because so many themes and actions in *Hamlet* are motivated by power and the struggle for it, influences of military dress can be seen throughout both inside and outside worlds of the play.

In our exploration the definitions of madness, Hamlet's character is ultimately the most sane person in our world, although initially he holds no power. Wrongly imprisoned by Claudius, he suffers inside the asylum feigning madness in order to survive. While some productions portray Hamlet as a quiet, contemplative man driven mad by revenge, our Hamlet is much more masculine and cunning, calculating his every move to avenge his father's death. I designed his black leather jacket, bound with leather straps, studded with silver brads, and chained across the back, and his black skinny jeans to give him a sleek and swarthy look. His dark coloring sets him apart from the muddled neutrals of the other inmates and is indicative of his mourning for his father and his unwillingness to move on.



Figure 4.1 – (From Left to Right) *Hamlet* (Costume Rendering), James Costello as *Hamlet* (Production Photo)

The most powerful character inside the asylum, but also the most insane, is undoubtedly Claudius. Having overthrown the governmental party running the asylum, he now knows and sees everything, furthering his own interests through medical experimentation on the other weaker inmates. These experiments also serve his sole motivations - power and control over others, especially through the exploitation of fear. To visually convey his authority, I costumed him in a regal doublet, vest, and sleek trousers, to distinguish him from the other inmates. We constructed his doublet from cream and tan textured chenille upholstery fabric, adding leather straps across his chest. His vest received a special spray dye treatment, adding wide black stripes to plain canvas, creating something reminiscent of prison stripes. These colors compliment Gertrude's

gray fishtail underskirt with brown and cream buckle-up overskirt. One of Claudius' trophies, Gertrude revels in the power and protection Claudius affords her. Gertrude clearly has used and currently uses her sexuality for personal gain. Only much later does she realize how deep she has fallen under his control. The control Claudius subtly maintains over his wife is alluded to in her clothing. I chose a body binding leather corset with several cross body straps, her cream lace up garter belt is worn on the outside of her clothing, and her neck and arms are cuffed in black lace.



Figure 4.2 – (From Left to Right) Claudius (Costume Rendering), Gertrude (Costume Rendering)



Figure 4.3 – Richard Willis as Claudius and Melissa Reed as Gertrude (Production Photo)

Polonius, while second in command, functions as a pawn of Claudius performing and oversees the experimentation in the asylum. Although bending to Claudius' will, he harbors desires for ultimate power and uses his daughter and son to pursue it. His clothes maintained a militaristic and functional silhouette, but incorporated aspects of medical uniforms as well. I selected sturdy black combat boots to protect his feet, and a cream linen lab coat splattered in blood from the inmates he experiments on. His son Laertes, intense, physical, and always quick to take action, has found favor with Claudius, and is even perhaps about to be released from his control. He also wore combat boots, but I designed him with brown faux leather skinny jeans and a straitjacket inspired distressed

doublet. The final member of their family, Ophelia, truly is the victim of the play, abused and manipulated by her father and brother with no mother figure for support and guidance. Caught between Hamlet's love and the mistreatment by those who should love her, she succumbs to madness. Ophelia was one of the few characters with multiple looks. She began in a distressed cream gown I designed and constructed with a voluminous skirt and a frayed corset. Her gown somewhat resembled a wedding dress, to reflect the love she so desperately craves. The volume of her skirt hid the evidence of her abuse, and only later did we see her stripped of her layers, wearing only a cotton shift and bruised tattoo tights.



Figure 4.4 – (From Left to Right) Polonius (Costume Rendering), Ophelia (Costume Rendering), Laertes (Costume Rendering)



Figure 4.5 – (From Left to Right) Trey Hobbs as Polonius (Production Photo), Laurie Roberts as Ophelia (Production Photo), Cory Lipman as Laertes (Production Photo)

Claudius and Polonius maintain order in their asylum through numerous inmate guards and nurses, who also may have previously served the government, but who are now loyal to Claudius' established order. Everyone and every inmate should have the constant awareness of being watched, inspired by the panoptical prisons of the Victorian era. For the guard costumes, I mixed 1930s military jodhpurs with a leather straitjacket inspired doublet. Military haircuts unified these men and conveyed their willingness to act and defend. A female counterpart to the guards were the nurses, who, similarly, may have once been so, but certainly now are corrupted. I chose tight jegging style pants and a lace up jacket to identify these women with the guards, but their masculine style and coverage of clothing separated them from the sexualized characters of Gertrude and

Ophelia. The guards and nurses are a constant presence in the asylum, always watching, inspired by the panopticon.



Figure 4.6- (From Left to Right) Asylum Guards (Costume Rendering), Liam MacDougall as Bernardo (Production Photo)

Another watchful presence in the asylum is the ghost of Hamlet's father. Rather than the guiding ghosts of some productions, this demonic ghost evokes fear and warning. Seen in shadow, his silhouette haunts the inmates. I was inspired by the scarecrow character from the Batman movie franchise, and our ghost wore a long black trench coat and patched burlap face mask, and his metal spindled fingers created a terrifying shape on the glass walls. The burlap mask hides and protects his face, now deformed from Claudius' experimentation and ultimately his murder. Our production utilized two ghosts, allowing for quick entrances and exits, misdirection, and the feeling

of no escape from the Ghost's presence.



Figure 4.7 – (From Left to Right) The Ghost of King Hamlet (Costume Rendering), Freddie Powers as the Ghost (Production Photo)

The only characters more terrifying the Hamlet's Ghost are the players. The players surface from the bowels of the asylum as lobotomized and injured to play before the king, having found a trunk of clothes and a make-up kit along the way and transformed themselves into a troupe of carnival clowns. I wanted each of these characters to have a visual injury and to wear some kind of homemade medical support or brace to show the extent of their abuse. Their looks also mirrored the inmates they are satirizing. The player king's pants received a prison stripe dye treatment to mirror Claudius' vest and the Player Queen's back brace emulated Gertrude's cross body binding corset. Despite being so physically abused, the players are the point of great

change in the action of the play. Their performance sets the rest of the action in motion, leading to the final confrontation at the play's conclusion.



Figure 4.8 – The Players (Costume Rendering)



Figure 4.9 – (From Left to Right) Liam MacDougall as the Player King (Production Photo), John Floyd as the Player Queen (Production Photo)

One character bridges the gap between the inmates and the outsiders – the gravedigger. He has a timeless presence in the asylum, having survived Claudius' takeover unnoticed and functions as the janitor of the asylum, always listening rather than watching or being seen. Although only present in one short scene, the gravedigger and Hamlet have a quite sane conversation about life and death, allowing Hamlet time to reflect. I dressed him head to toe in rags, indicating the extreme age of his clothes and he had a combination of inmate and outsider clothing.



Figure 4.10 – (From Left to Right) *The Gravedigger* (Costume Rendering), Trey Hobbs as the *Gravedigger* (Production Photo)

Horatio, played by a woman in our production, is the first outsider to penetrate the walls of the asylum. She comes out of loyalty for Hamlet and stays as his unwavering confidant in the asylum out of moral obligation. Her loyalty to Hamlet is constant throughout, guiding him to his father's ghost and being charged as a witness to all major events at the conclusion of the play. She documents the inmate's life inside, taking photographs as proof, indicating herself as the source of truth. Since this role is traditionally played by a man, maintaining a strong masculine presence in our female character was important. By designing her in a 1940s pants suit and coat, she held her own against the male inmates, but maintained slightly feminine because of her softer 1940s hairstyle.



Figure 4.11 – (From Left to Right) *Horatio (Costume Rendering)*, *Kate Dzyonik as Horatio (Production Photo)*

Claudius summons Rosencrantz and Guildenstern from the outside to observe and guard Hamlet. The military inspired clothing I chose immediately categorized them as a source of power and indicated their loyalties to Claudius rather than their fellow student. Usually two men, our Rosencrantz was played by a woman and Guildenstern by a man, so it was even more important that their clothing match and complement one another to maintain their association. Rosencrantz wore a twill convertible riding skirt, a pant appearing to be a skirt, and a vest, mixing masculine and feminine elements. Guildenstern wore an army uniform, both characters colored in hunter green.



Figure 4.12 – (From Left to Right) Guildenstern (Costume Rendering), Rosencrantz (Costume Rendering)



Figure 4.13- (From Left to Right) Josiah Laubenstein as Guildenstern (Production Photo), Leeanna Rubin as Rosencrantz (Production Photo)

Our created “special world” for *Hamlet* functioned with tremendous success. The set and lights designed by Professor Jim Hunter reflected a corroded and spooky abandoned asylum ward. Backlighting effects projected on a wall of windows created dramatic silhouette sequences to underscore the text of the play. Sound Designer Britt Sandusky compiled a score of clanking chains, eerie laughter, and slamming doors. All the costumes received an extra layer of distressing and painting to match them with this world, and together, all the elements combined to create our exploration of the essence of madness channeled through Shakespeare’s masterpiece.



Figure 4.14 – Hamlet and his father's Ghost (Production Photo)

CONCLUSION

The most important lesson that I learned throughout graduate school is the importance of collaborative adaptability in the field of design and theater. Because a play is an evolving piece of artwork, decisions made in the first design meetings are not always the correct choices for the final performance or the final characters. Retrospectively, my adaptability challenges grew gradually, with my largest challenge occurring during my final graduate design process. In *Polaroid Stories*, the director felt my original rendering was too conservative, and I thought his original idea was too extreme. Blending the two concepts together and meeting in the middle ultimately created the strongest concept. A costume designer must be able to support and defend their decisions, but they must also be able to realize when changes need to be made to better serve the play and the director's goals for it. During *Compleat Female Stage Beauty*, I was, naturally, expecting a man to be cast as Edward Kynaston. I was stunned when Gary Logan cast Melissa Reed instead. This decision brought more logistical challenges than artistic ones. We ended up building almost all of her clothing because of her petite stature, and modifying her body shape through binding and padding. Originally, I was so focused on the logistical problems with this casting that I was trying to solve some of them through my design. A designer should not let these logistical issues drive their creative process, but should be aware of potential problem solving. My largest challenge came with *Hamlet*. The show was originally intended to be an Elizabethan style, colorful outdoor production. We agreed upon a slightly modernized

period silhouette and I sketched all my characters appropriately. However, at our next meeting, the concept had changed to an extremely conceptual and modernized Hamlet set inside an insane asylum. In my first year, this change would have upset me because I was already “done” with the show. Now, in my third year, I was excited because this project offered me the opportunity to create a collaborative “special world” for our show as well as more opportunity for creativity in the costumes. Ultimately, I learned that costume design is a process, not a task to be completed, and valuing the process as much as the product allows you the most growth as an artist.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Estell, Lovell, III. "Compleat Female Stage Beauty." *LA Weekly*. LP, 1 May 2008. Web.

<<http://www.laweekly.com/2008-05-01/calendar/compleat-female-stage-beauty/>>.

Hatcher, Jeffrey. *Compleat Female Stage Beauty*. New York, NY: Dramatists Play Service, 2006. Print.

Iizuka, Naomi, and Ovid. *Polaroid Stories: An Adaptation of Ovid's Metamorphoses*. Woodstock, IL: Dramatic Pub., 1999. Print.

Jones, Robert Edmond. *The Dramatic Imagination: Reflections and Speculations on the Art of the Theatre*. New York: Theatre Arts, 1941. Print.

Shakespeare, William. *The Tragedies of Shakespeare*. Chicago: Spencer, 1955. Print.

Williams, Tennessee. *27 Wagons Full of Cotton and Other One-act Plays*. Norfolk, CT: New Directions, 1953. Print.